

George Long delivering a Uintah County Historical Society meeting lecture on the Uintah Railway, 8 January 1983.

Society business.

George Long: I want to thank LaVon for asking me, or giving me the opportunity, to take part this afternoon. I just hope that I don't disappoint her or disappoint you. I want to take this time to wish each and every one of you a happy new year. So far it started out pretty good. This is fine for January and I hope it stays this way till February and then warms up.

The talk that I'm going to give today is on the old Uintah Railway. It is a very interesting and important subject of mine. I've talked on it before. Some of you probably was here when I gave a talk on it three or four years ago. Before I get started, can everyone hear me okay? I hope I'm not too loud. Before I start on the things concerning the Uintah Railway and how it came to existence, I'd like to mention a few things leading up to it.

It came about due to the Gilsonite industry. I think we're all familiar with [it], we all have to agree it's been one of the leading industries in the Uinta Basin from the early 1900s. About that time, about the turn of the century, Gilsonite was being mined mostly at the Ft. Duchesne/Gusher area at the St. Louis operation, so called because some finance here and the heads of the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company in St. Louis gained control of the property. They had ideas of lining the beer barrels with Gilsonite, just one of the diverse things that they had for its use. It didn't prove too successful and later on other things more important and of more successful nature came into being with the use of Gilsonite.

Also about that time, the Pariette Mine south of Myton and these two mines freighted their Gilsonite to Price, a distance of about one hundred and ten miles through Nine Mile Canyon and a very slow, very tedious [journey]. The Gilson Asphalt & Company, headed by John Mack of Mack Motor Company, acquired most of the leases, most of the property. They knew if they were going to make their notch as a leading industry, they were going to have to figure some way to get this product to the main railroad. So, they contacted Denver and Rio Grande and the Union Pacific and a few of the other main carriers, and none of them was interested in building a railroad into the Uinta Basin.

Then they decided to build their own railroad. They took the closest point of their main veins to the railroad, that would be the Black Dragon Mine south of White River about twenty miles. This constituted building a line over some of the most rugged country in this area, over Baxter Pass and from the Grand Junction area.

Along with this, the St. Louis Mine had caught on fire a couple of times, had a couple of bad explosions, and killed several people. The walls, one thing and another were of a nature that it wasn't a safe mining operation anymore. In 1903 they acquired a permit to build a railroad from Mack, Colorado, named after the head of their company, John Mack, to Dragon, Utah, a total distance of fifty-three and a half miles.

At this time, narrow gauge railroading was hard on its skids. It had reached its high point in the late 1880s. From that time, from 1890 on, why, the narrow gauge railroad trackage kept dropping. The Denver Rio Grande, which was the largest of any narrow gauge railroad carrier, had a total of 1600 miles. They even went so far as Salt Lake and Ogden with narrow-gauge line.

In 1890 and '91 and '92, they replaced all this with standard gauge. There were several other narrow gauge railroads in Colorado, but after the turn of the century, the Uintah was the only major one, with the exception of the Argentine Central, which was a small railroad up Georgetown Canyon out of Denver. They were the only two railroads of any consequence that were built in the state of Colorado, or the West for that matter [in the twentieth century]. So it was sort of extraordinary that this line would be built in a time that narrow gauge railroads were starting to go out of the picture, but nonetheless, it was the only...

Woman: What is your narrow gauge?

George: Three foot is narrow gauge and four foot ten is standard. Standard gauge, on certain grades, they can't be above, I don't know, I think it's three percent or something. You'll notice, some of the old railroad beds down around Thistle and that, they wind around. Also, they can only negotiate a certain degree of curve. In this country, it was impossible to build such a railroad, so they had to go narrow gauge because of the terrain. 1903 it was surveyed and work started in January of 1904. By October of that year the line had reached Dragon. It was almost record-breaking time for the type of country that they had built a railroad. Prior to this, the camp had been built up to Dragon Mine and the ore had been stockpiled in [readiness for] the railroad. So as soon as it reached it there, why they soon started shipping back over the pass to Mack. From there it was loaded onto the standard gauge Denver & Rio Grande.

Man: Were they sacking it at that time?

George: Yes, they sacked it. It was all sacked. They had been at camp there for a year. When they found out in 1903 that they was going to build a railroad, then they built a camp at the Dragon Mine and they started sacking and stockpiling. A little of it was freighted out.

I became interested in this story when my wife and I were married and moved to White River. We lived for two years where they now practically liberated the little valley, the crossing there at White River where the old Ignacio Stage and Freight Station was. We lived there; in fact, we rented a cabin from W.A. Banks for \$3 a month. The view from the front of our cabin looking south through this rugged country, the huge rock formation we call Castle Rock, was really something.

We traveled throughout the area horseback, or where we could in car, walk, whatever, we became very familiar. We went to the old towns of Rainbow and Rector and Dragon. My wife had lived in Rainbow and attended school there as a small girl. Her dad worked in the mine, and her mother ran a boarding house. So she was quite familiar with this operation. She had seen something I never saw, that was, she'd seen the train in operation.

My sister, Ruby Freestone, had worked at Watson, one of the first telephone operators, and she worked out there for a time. Other people that I knew real well, Luvie Jacobson that many of you know, sons, Dick and I were very close friends. Also Byron Thomas, I worked for him in the sawmill. Byron was one of the mechanics at Atchee over the mountain on the south side of the pass. Lloyd Devine, John Scott and his wife, Jess Richens, and a number of them that I knew and good friends that relate information on to me about this extraordinary railroad.

The wife and I would visit, take trips to Dragon, and this is back in '47 and '48. Many of the buildings were still at Dragon, although the major ones had been torn down. There was a few

left at Watson. [The] Jacobson home was still standing at Watson, and so was one that W.A. Banks had lived in. There were no buildings at Rainbow. Charlie Neal also ran the mine. He was another fellow who spent a lot of time out there, and he acquired [for back taxes] the leases after the Barber Asphalt Company let them go. He had operations running at three mines. One was called the Three Mile Mine, up Three Mile Canyon, the Black Virgin, and the China Wall Mine at Rainbow. For a number of years he'd truck this Gilsonite over the pass in old Army 6X6 trucks to Mack. Later, he brought it out the other way and shipped it to either Craig or Price.

I was really enthused with the background of this railroad. I guess as a child growing up and not living in railroad country, I become very interested in trains, they fascinated me. My first venture of seeing a train was with the late Cal Jorgensen. My father and I accompanied him in 1935 over Douglas Pass, which in itself was quite a thing even with a truck back then, and staying overnight in Palisade and seeing the trains go by. This time the narrow gauge was still running, but I never did ever get to see it, something that I'm very sorry about. My father and mother rode on it, my two sisters, Willard Rasmussen, my brother-in-law, and maybe, probably, some of you people have rode on the train.

Comment.

George: You probably have a vast knowledge of what I'm going to talk about. There have been many wonderful people that had their roots out in that country, been affiliated with it. I spent most of the time naming people that live right here in Vernal that grew up out there, or else one way or another were associated with it. The Barber Company, the railroad, but I won't get into that except to say they did have a different background that I envy. And most of us don't realize, I guess, just what that part out there played in our community and how it made it grow.

Anyway, after the railroad was installed, they shipped a lot of wool, wool was an important industry here. In fact, sheepherding and the Gilsonite mine was about the only two jobs that was available in this country unless it was local farm-work or something. The mail came that way for a number of years. But probably one of the most important things, *the* most important thing, was the Gilsonite.

In 1908 fire broke out in the Cumberland tunnel of the Black Dragon Mine and the mine blew up killing two people. It was fifteen months before they could get the two out. They were Greek miners and still had their paychecks in their pockets. They were engulfed in this hot Gilsonite, their bodies were preserved almost perfectly in that length of time. The company, for a long while, had the checks; and up until L.D. Berry resigned, you could go ask them and they kept them there in the safe to show you. They still had their checks in their shirt pockets. When this happened, the operation then moved over hill to what they called the Country Boy and the Rector. My mother told me that when she was married and went on her honeymoon, her father took them to Dragon to catch the train in 1908. The smoke was still coming from the mine, it had happened a month before she was married.

Dragon, aside from Vernal, was the most important town in the Basin, and an awful lot of business took place out there. They had everything from schools to a library, saloons, of course, barbershop, just about anything you could think of. These people had to make their own recreation so they did the best they could. W.A. Banks said that when they played ball, the road went right through the middle of the ball diamond and you had to be careful you didn't twist an ankle. Many times it'd be held up while a freight wagon went through.

In the summertime, it would get real hot at Dragon. The railroad company would give them a special car, an engine, and they would go through the mountain-cool areas of Baxter Pass and McAndrews, Columbine; there they would enjoy the coolness of the mountains. This usually happened on every holiday and usually every other Sunday. Mr. Banks said at times they would hitch a ride behind a train with what they called a go-devil. This was a type of a handcar that they used to inspect the tracks and stuff. He said he'd hitch on behind, he and his family. I imagine Bus and Helen well remember it. Then he said when they would get to where they wanted, they would let go, park, and have their picnic. When it got time to go home, they'd coast all the way back to Dragon.

One time a flood hit and washed out a portion of the railroad and they nearly lost their lives. They run off where the track had been washed away and landed in a deep gulch. Those of you who have lived out there know what the cloudbursts in this area can be. They can be terrific and they can come up in just a few moments' time. Evacuation Wash drained many, many miles of country on this side of the pass and Salt Wash, the same on the south side of the pass.

The railroad towns were not self-sustaining, so they were totally dependent on the railroad. The only thing that they had that didn't have to be shipped in on the railroad was deer meat. A lot of deer abounded in that country. Everything else, including the water, came in on special tank cars.

Dragon had one of the most modern hotels anywhere in the West, anywhere between Salt Lake and Denver. [It] had a huge water tank above the hotel, and they'd run the train to it, fill that tank and give them lots of water pressure in the hotel itself. Oysters [were] brought in. About the only place you could get fresh oysters or anything like that was at Dragon, because they would come in on the train. They probably served some of the finest meals that could be found anywhere out there. Coal was brought in, everything, except, like I say, the meat. The ranchers in the nearby area had lots of sheep and lots of cattle. So aside from these, everything was brought in by the railroad.

In fact, there was a time that the only way you could go to Atchee was on the railroad, because after the railroad was built, part of it went over the old wagon road. Unless you were horseback or on the train, it was practically impossible to get to Atchee. At Atchee, they had the round-house and they built a lot of their own cars, railroad cars. They even constructed a Shay engine there from spare parts that they had. Byron Thomas, one of their top mechanics for many years, he worked out there. Henry Lee lived at Atchee, in fact, that's where Clyde was born and he later moved to Dragon, then I think later to Watson. He was quite a businessman.

Fires were a common thing in these little towns. They had a couple of grass fires at Dragon, one that burned up a huge supply of Gilsonite. Another one burned a warehouse down and \$15,000 worth of freight goods. \$15,000 in 1910 was a lot of money, it is right now. Most of these fires were attributed to little trains, the steam engine, the burning of the wood and coal in these boilers.

One fire that took place out there in what they called Owen's Saloon I'd like to mention. The saloon caught on fire and they had some kind of a bell they rung and a lot of the men responded to the fire, especially when they found out it was Owen's Saloon. Owen saved his money, and when the men come in, they went right directly to the basement and saved the whiskey supply. Said there wasn't too much furniture or anything like that saved, but they saw to it that the whiskey got saved.

The type of engine power that was used to pull these trains up over a seven and a half

percent grade, which is beyond any doubt the steepest railroad in the world, in the United States, was a gear-type locomotive. These were a short-couple locomotive and still again, the Shay type; they were operated with gears. They were called Shays and very slow, but this is what they used exclusively on the railroad up over Baxter Pass from Atchee to Wendella. Sometimes they had to put these in lots of two and three to get up over the pass when it was storming.

They had their share of wrecks. One wreck in 1910 or '11, I can't remember which, it also brings it out in the book, they were bucking snow along in February and the engine became stalled. The line going back to the car for the passengers was froze up and they had no heat. One of the executives of the railroad was in a car that night. He got up and went and got in the engine with the engineer and the fireman. They kept bucking the snow and for some reason, the water got low in the engine and before the engineer detected it, the engine blew up, blew the crown head off. It killed the executive of the railroad, and killed the fireman, and blew the engineer clear out of the engine cab. I've had Bill [Morrison] tell me this. Louis Kabell was one of the early pioneers here and Dr. George Christy was also at the train that night, it states in this book by Henry Bender. This, by the way, is a very good book on this railroad, this fellow done one of the most thorough jobs of research that could possibly be done.

There were other accidents. The train would give way going down the pass, and one such time the train got clear off the track and went right down the mountainside with George Lyman, who had spent many years as an engineer, and was killed in this wreck. There were others, but all in all, compared with other railroads and the type of terrain and the hazard they had to put up with, it ran pretty safely.

[In] 1911 the railroad extended from Dragon to Watson, a distance of about ten miles going up Evacuation Wash. Every time anything like this would happen, the Vernal newspaper would become excited and it would be big items written that the railroad was going to come into Vernal. They thought this from Day One, but it never appeared. The railroad came on in to Watson and from there it turned and took a southerly course to the mining camp of Rainbow, three and a half miles away. Rainbow become the main operation of Gilsonite in the Uinta Basin for the next twenty-five years.

Business extended the railroad's expansion with one exception. In 1929, it extended on down the Rainbow vein, China Wall, a distance of two miles called the American Switch. This was the height of its size, never went any further. Prior to this time, the survey crews that came in, the line had been surveyed all the way to Vernal. It was called Ashley Forks instead of Vernal. Ashley Forks was the name that stuck from the time of Old Ashley Town. There was talk of tunneling underneath Baxter Pass, so when the extension was made from Dragon to Watson, the standard size ties were used, so everybody knew, "Well, hey, it's going to come into the Basin." They did think so, they took surveys.

The Colorado Midland, which was a standard gauge railroad out of Colorado Springs, run as far as Grand Junction, Colorado, was considering buying the line and running a line on through the Uinta Basin to Salt Lake. So, standard size ties were laid and this is what they had in mind, but the only thing that happened was WWI broke the Colorado Midland. They went into receivership right after the war, so this never materialized.

I've got a lot of notes that I picked out of the *Vernal Express* back in the years past, little items, the Uintah Railway going to come into Vernal, they had their headquarters here. The Moffat route, which was the one that come from Denver. Yet to this day Vernal still hasn't got a railroad. The Uintah, named after the Uinta Basin, did play a very important part, and it

definitely was an asset to us.

Now, besides Gilsonite, wool was probably its next main commodity. There were shearing plants at Coyote Wash, which is about two miles north of Bonanza. My brother-in-law tells me that there was a store here operated by Tom Sabey. It was quite a place, big shearing corrals. There was a large shearing corral at Watson, largest of all. Thousands of head of sheep were sheared and also some at White River. Lafe Bouns was probably the largest sheep man in the country, maybe the largest ever, I don't know, wintered lots of sheep out in this area. There was many other herders, so wool was a very, very important commodity, very important to the railroad. It served a very important part of this early basin's life.

When the railroad in the late '20's and trucking started to come into existence, roads yet were quite bad. Prior to this, Mack Motor Company were building some large Mack touring cars. These cars would hold about ten or twelve people. So they said, "Hey, we'll do away with the wagons, no sense having the slow horse and buggy or team and wagon in our freighting business and in our stage business." So, they brought some of these early Mack motor cars. Well, they worked fine as long as the weather was good, but every time it would storm, they'd end up stuck and they'd have to wait for a team to arrive to pull them out. So this didn't last too long.

Then they tried hauling freight in with an early Caterpillar called a Holt. It made a couple of trips into Vernal and the tracks were wore out, that far, in sand and one thing and another. So, they went back to the team and wagon, and this took place until about 1925 when trucks started coming into existence. Shortly after this, when it looked like they were going to have to come up with a little quicker, more positive motor car on the railroad, because these little engines, they'd have to use two and three of them sometimes to go over the pass, and they were real slow, a fellow by the name of Lucian Sprague, who was in charge of the operation at that time, got together with his top mechanic at Atchee and they drew up a plan to build a large engine that would pivot in the middle, so to speak, and be able to negotiate the 66% curve of Baxter Pass.

They then made a trip to the plant of the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Pennsylvania and laid their plans before some engineers. They, in turn, come up and looked the place over and they constructed an engine that was double the size of any engine that they had on the run. In fact, the largest narrow gauge railroad engine built anywhere before or since was built especially for this here railroad. They brought it out and put it on a run. The first trip over, it slipped off the tracks at what they call Moro Castle Curve, that's on the other side of the steepest curve and also the steepest grade. They got it back on the tracks, and whatever it was, they corrected it.

The next trip over, the engineer noticed that he'd lost all the water in his side gauge, so this almost spelled certain catastrophe when you lose the water in a locomotive boiler. The crown sheet becomes exposed and then when the water comes back into it, it creates a fast amount of steam and will blow the crown head off. Well, he made it down the mountain and quit. He said, "No more for me."

So, they called in their engineers and went to work on it and about half of them going down hill, this huge boiler, so long as it was, all the water would run forward in it and it left the back end of it high and dry. They got to checking up, when they built this engine back in Baldwin Works, they had wrote on the paper that it had to climb a seven and a half percent grade and go down a seven and a half percent grade, a distance of, some of them was five miles. The builders back there didn't believe it. They said, "There's no railroad in the United States more than six percent grade." So, they ignored this. Well, it actually is a seven and a half percent grade.

So, right there at Atchee, they corrected it. Somehow they put in some baffles [and a second steam dome] and made what they call a two-tone boiler, and they corrected the problem. From then on, the huge locomotive went up and down the pass almost with ease. It took the place of any two locomotives; in fact, more so, plus it had much more speed. So they immediately ordered another one. For the rest of the life of the railroad, these two Mallets, as they called them, were the main source of locomotive power. They did have to strengthen the trestles to accommodate them. They weighed one hundred and twenty-three tons each, compared to about sixty-seven tons, or something like that, to the next size. By the way, I think that Uintah probably had more trestles for its length than probably any other railroad. It almost seemed like you'd go off one trestle and you'd be onto another one.

Woman: George, how long was that railroad?

George: Fifty-three and a half miles to Dragon town. One and a half miles from there up to the Dragon Mine. Eleven miles on to Watson, then three and a half miles from there to Rainbow. That's about a total of sixty-seven or sixty-eight miles, maybe seventy, round total of seventy miles from the Dragon to the American Switch. To Dragon, fifty-three and a half miles, on to Watson was something like sixty-four.

Woman: It not only carried Gilsonite...

BEGIN SIDE TWO

Woman: ...they went on the narrow gauge railroad to the large railroad and she got into Salt Lake and they saved her life and the baby. So, this old railroad touches everyone.

George: It really does. I think most of you who have much time here and check back with your parents, maybe you'll find out that there was quite a lot involved with them on this railroad.

Unintelligible comment

Woman: There's a story about the women worrying about the train coming in and scaring their buggy horses.

Did you talk about that little old narrow gauge that they say comes in from the east, you know, and winds around, around, around the top of the mountain. It was so high. Then it goes around and back, back down, and is Watson on that side of the river or are Dragon and Watson on our side?

George: They are on the other side of Green River. The line came through Watson and from there on in they came with team and wagon. Ene [Enoch] Gurr was in charge of the freight road almost all his [life], well, until he died in 1933. He was in charge of the freight road and done a terrific job with it. His son-in-laws, John Scott and Jess Richins, freighted on this road, and I'd like to mention that there were several unique things that took place. One was the parcel post and parcel post rates.

Out in Salt Lake, parcel post was figured in distance as the crow flies, which, like from

here to Salt Lake would be 170 miles, maybe, 160. But, in order to get that parcel post here, it went sometimes great distances, by going around to Grand Junction and being transferred to the Uintah, then unloaded at Watson, and brought here by team and wagon.

Now, parcel post cost five cents for the first pound and one cent per pound after that up to fifty pounds, a fifty-pound limit. And freight cost forty cents a hundred, plus a dollar a hundred to bring it in on a freight wagon. The train charged forty cents a hundred for freight, then once it got on the freight wagon, it was another dollar. So, there was \$1.40. So, you've got two fifty-pound packages that you could get in here for \$1.08. It was thirty-two cents less than having it come by freight.

Okay. People soon started taking advantage of this. It was quite a savings. You know, everything from horseshoes to blacksmith tools to flour, even fifty-pound sacks of cement, was being shipped this way into Vernal. The post office was so crowded with stuff, you could hardly find your way through it. They were aghast at the problems that were building up on them. Thirty-five tons of brick were shipped this way. Willard's dad, John Rasmussen, helped haul some of that. It would come in fifty-pound lots. So, the bank down here was built, the Bank of Vernal building, the Coltharp Building, was built out of these brick.

This brick brought an investigation. The government, they sent some inspectors out, and they soon changed. They would only allow one package per person, like every day or once a week, or something like that. So, they brought that to a halt. But, it totaled thousands of dollars that the government lost during this time, about a two-year period.

Woman: Well, my father gave that a couple months ago on the drop stores here. He was managing the Acorn [Mercantile]. They had a regular drop at the post office, the stores did, because they'd get so much in each day in fifty-pound lots.

Man: I remember seeing some of those bricks come in. They were packed, I think, in packages of five, then there were nails. It made a nice little box made out of slats that were about one-half inch thick by one-inch wide and there were nice little boxes around these five brick. That's the way they all came. Eventually, they had to send them to 101 different people in town.

George: It created quite a problem. You can imagine how that would be. It was great business, I guess, for those fellows who were hauling. But, anyway, it soon got to people back in Washington: "Hey, what's going on out here in the Uinta Basin. We're losing so much money in the postal department."

Another thing, the toll road operated from Watson into Vernal for many years, until 1936. Now, I didn't realize that it operated that long, but it did. They had a station master down on White River. That place has all been destroyed. It makes me sad to go out and look at it. Talk about progression, I don't know, it don't set too well with me. But anyway, they had a toll station here. The fellow lived right at the edge of the road, close to the bridge. They charged so much a car, so much a cow, so much a sheep, and so on and so forth, when you used this toll bridge.

Back then a dollar was, like I say, it was a dollar, ninety-nine and ninety-nine hundredths worth. Some of the people would even go around and go down through Park Canyon to get to Country Boy and the Rector mines and whatever they were working. Others would wait until after dark and they'd watch Mr. Wolfe's light, and when his light would go out, they would breeze down the road in their Model T or whatever vehicle, and hit the bridge before he got out

there. Some of them got away with it until he put a chain across it and some of them nearly got killed. That put a stop to the night travel as far as trying to slip through. They stopped then and honked their horn and woke him up.

Man: What did they have in the way of a bridge before that steel suspension bridge was built?

George: I'm glad you brought that up. Prior to the steel bridge, which was built in 1912, the bridge was above about a mile and a half, two miles. You can still see the old riffraff where they had it rocked in where the road comes up out of the river. They had a white bridge there and this bridge went out on two occasions, and nearly on a third, to the point that they built the iron one. Ice jams was usually involved in taking the bridges out. An ice jam on the White River could be quite common. I've seen them. The ice would build up above, then it would break loose.

John Scott told me one time, and I hope you don't mind me kind of getting off the railway part, but he said they wanted to find this ice that'd built up, I think 1909. And he said it broke loose in the night. It started raining and he said it broke loose and he said it was like a thousand dynamite blasts going off at once, it cracked and popped so loud. He got on his horse and rode south to Teddy Longhurst's ranch. Teddy Longhurst had a place out there, a homestead, later acquired by Mr. Banks. So, John said he rode for all he was worth to get down to warn Teddy—it was in the middle of the night—so they could move to higher ground. But he said, as it turned out to be, why, it played itself out before it got down there.

But they had so much trouble in losing this bridge that in 1912, they built this bridge and it still stands. It served a purpose all these years until the big oil equipment started coming in and they had to built another one.

Man: Then it was built the next year after the first Jensen bridge was built?

George: Yes. Next to the first Jensen bridge, it was the oldest bridge in the county, of metal bridges.

In 1936 the Uintah Railway decided to give up the toll road. So, they met with county commissioners Willis Johnson and John Bolton and John Weaver, some of you remember those fellows, and applied for release of the toll road. The county took over part of it; the state took over part of it. It's an odd thing. You go out there and part of that road is state, Willard [Rasmussen] would come out there and work. They couldn't do any work on the road down Wagon Hound Canyon. They had to go on beyond that and work on out to the Colorado line. So, it was a split-up fair and I don't whether it's ever going to change.

At any rate, in 1936 it ceased to be a toll road. It was the last such road in the state of Utah. In fact, I think it was the last toll road in the west as far as the road itself. There's toll bridges, but the last of old regular toll roads was this one out here.

Now, W.A. Banks says that in its heyday, the road out south of Bonanza, to Dragon, was a good road, it had a good base. But out around Alhandra and out across the Devil's Playground, it was different. You've been out in that country, some of you, and you know what it can be when it's muddy. [You could bog a wagon wheel to the axles.]

Also about this time, the handwriting was on the wall for the little railroad. Trucks were starting to come in. They had a huge earth slide on the south side of the pass in about 1930, nearly half the mountain, shoved the railroad a hundred yards down the hill. This mountain's

been moving for years and still does. Do any of you go to Dragon? You can see places where it's shifted from time to time. So, it put the railroad out of commission for six weeks. They brought one of their own steam shovels, brought it in on a railcar, finally, realigned the line. [Vernal's George Winder was killed on this job.] But while they were doing this, the ore was trucked up from Craig on the Victory Highway. It wasn't paved yet, but it did let the people of Barber Asphalt know that, hey, there's something in the making pretty soon, a quicker, cheaper type of transportation. So, from that time on, why, they knew it was a matter of time until the railroad would be abandoned unless it could be made standard.

Again, the Barber Company wasn't in the railroad business except for their own commodity, and none of the other mainline railroad carriers were interested in them. So, after the toll road was closed, Luvie Jacobson and W.A. Banks had a fleet of trucks moving ore from Bonanza to Watson and also from Watson into Vernal. It was decided by the head men of the Barber Company to move the operations at Bonanza. Homer D. Ford was in charge of the whole operation for them. Mr. Sprague had went to another job.

So, in 1937 they started moving to Bonanza; in 1938 they finished the move to Bonanza. All the cabins, all the houses at Rainbow were moved to Bonanza. The Rector Mine, which was owned by American Asphalt Company, up Rector Canyon, a few miles this side of Dragon, they started moving their operations to Little Bonanza, moved many of their houses from there. So, in 1938, the Barber Asphalt Company applied for and received a permit from the ICC for abandonment of the railroad.

Before this could take place, they had to also meet with members of the community. So, the county commissioners, probably the mayor and a few of them, I imagine Mr. Banks, some of the sheepmen, met here at Vernal at the courthouse to see if they could keep the railroad running. It was decided that about the only business it would have would be delivering the wool because the sheering pens were located there and the sheep industry, a lot of their herds wintered out there. There just wasn't enough, so they gave permission to abandon the railroad.

The following year, 1939, they started tearing up the tracks and dismantled it. The last train ran out in July or August of that year, pulled by the famous Number 50 Mallet, articulated engine that I was telling you about a little earlier. So, it came to a sad close, an important part of our history in the making of this valley. I might say that all these engines and many of the cars were scrapped and sold to the Colorado Fuel and Steel at Pueblo, Colorado. They had some engines on this side of the pass that were so constructed that they couldn't cross the pass. They had be dismantled and that's the way they were brought over. They were brought over what they called piggyback.

... taking them back over the pass, or at least put one on a siding somewhere. The engines that was on this side that could not negotiate the sharp curve were cut up with cutting torches and hauled over the passes. The two large engines which were almost like new and, of course, as the life of a locomotive goes, were sold for \$20,000 apiece, which was just a fraction of what they were actually worth, to the Sumter Valley Line in Oregon. The rest of the engines were cut up and scrapped, with the exception of two or three. One went to the Bridger Line in California, and another one, I think, went to the Colorado and Southern. They've all since been scrapped with the exception of one.

The two large engines went to Oregon. After the Sumter Valley closed down, they went then to South America, and they were used on a narrow-gauge line down there until 1965, when they just were wore out. They didn't have the care that they should. But anyway, they finally quit

using them in 1965.

Now, these engines, as extraordinary as they were, there have never been any built like them before or since. A railroad man indicated that a fellow with a lot of money out of Grass Valley, California, bought one of them. He paid \$25,000 for it, which is more than what Sumter Valley paid for it when it was almost new. In the meantime, the civil war broke out in Guatemala, and he never got. The government changed hands, so he never got his engine.

It's too bad that one of them couldn't have been brought back here, you know. I've often thought about it. The only other engine that's in existence today stands at a siding between Henderson, Nevada, and Boulder Dam. This engine came to the Uintah in 1917 from a little railroad called the Cripple Creek and Florence Railroad out of a gold mining camp in Cripple Creek, Colorado. These companies, sold or exchanged locomotives back and forth back in their heyday, and the Barber Company acquired two from the Cripple Creek operation. This one that I'm talking about ran for twenty years between Atchee and Mack. In 1937 it was sold to the Eureka and Palisades Nevada Narrow Gauge Railroad. A year later that line shut down, so it set at a siding in Palisades, Nevada, just a little farther than ten miles south of Carlin, Nevada, set at a siding there for ten years. Then it was moved to a Frontier Hotel museum in Las Vegas for another four or five, and now it sits on a siding, as I told you, out between Boulder City and Boulder Dam.

The sad thing about it is, I went out and got pictures of it, they had repainted that a hideous color. They painted the smokestacks yellow, the wheels yellow, the cowcatcher yellow, the cab yellow and, of course, the black interlays. Too bad that they done this, that they couldn't have painted it the color original

They had a couple of cars in Golden, Colorado. These were passenger cars and I think they had one flat car. Uintah had some of the most unique rail cars, motor cars, they called them, built out of Mack cars, one from a Model T Ford, that they would use, the inspectors and the bosses, to drive to inspect the railroad. They had some odd-shaped cabooses of any railroad ever. All this has been destroyed with the exception of these couple of cars at Golden and this engine out by Boulder.

I want to give thanks to the people who have given me information on this railroad. It's given me a hobby. The wife and I nearly every summer go somewhere where there's a narrow-gauge railroad. We've ridden on the remaining ones in Colorado: the one down to Silverton and Durango; the one that's between Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico. We love this and narrow-gauge railroading offers a little bit something different than ordinary railroading. It was in mostly scenic country.

I think as far as the work or the challenge, it was more so than ordinary railroading because, hey, these people had a terrific job, a hard job, an exciting job to do. They couldn't operate the rotary track snowplow on the Uintah because there was too much curvature in the track and the rotary wouldn't work.

But, anyway, one of the things that made this railroad extraordinary and unique is the fact that, as I mentioned before, is that it was the steepest railroad in the United States. I think probably the steepest in the world. A slick track. It was the last major railroad to be built, of narrow gauge. It no doubt had the steepest grade and sharpest curves. I think it probably had the most trestles for its length of any railroad in comparison. It had, beyond a doubt, the largest locomotives ever built and it hauled the rarest cargo of all: Gilsonite.

Well, that's the size of my talk. I hoped I've told something you've enjoyed. If there's any

other questions, I'll try to answer.

Man: I remember coming across that road in March of 1920, and the engine that was pulling our train, I think it had two passenger cars on that train and the snow on the top of it was very deep, six feet maybe. But the pistons on the engine were on the sides and they were vertical. They geared down and it proceeded so slowly up that grade that you could, and we did, get off and walk alongside the train until we got to the top.

George: I've heard several people say that they could get off and walk on up to the next place and wait for the train to come.

Man: Was the Army involved? Did the Army use this railroad?

George: Yes. When they shipped some of the Vernal soldiers out during World War I, they went that way. There's a picture in this book showing them, and I think some of the troops from Ft. Duchesne, before it closed down, went out over that line.

Man: They didn't use it as a freight line. What was the Army's route then for coming in here? Was it the roads?

George: Oh, yes. To begin with they came in on roads, like back in the 1880s, came over the mountain from Ft. Bridger. That was the military road. They had a sawmill up there and a camp or two, and that's the way they came in was that. But when they abandoned Ft. Duchesne, I'm certain that most of the troops went out over the railroad, and I know some of the World War I soldiers did.

Woman: John Beaslin, his father was a conductor.

George: Yes, it mentions his name in here, too. John Beaslin's father was a conductor on it. John was born there.

Unintelligible comment.

George: There was some lambs shipped on it. They had some stock cars, but most of the larger animals, like cattle, they made their cattle drives. Joe Haslem says they would drive to Rifle or Debeque, Colorado. But yes, there was some lambs shipped out.

Unintelligible comment.

George: I'm not exactly sure of the year. Mr. Banks told me that he and Luvie Jacobsen went in partnerships for a number of years. They hauled Gilsonite, mainly, to begin with, from the Bandana and the Bonanza Mines. Dick Jacobson said when he was a boy, they lived in Watson. At one time, he said, the population got to twenty-five and there was twelve Jacobsons. He said, "We almost had control of the town."

Man: In 1924, I was working for Kings, a sheep outfit. We drove out sheep down to Atchee and loaded them there, then had to transfer them at Mack again. So, I know there was some sheep besides theirs. That was in the spring.

George: I do know, in the pictures I've seen, there was stock cars, but I don't think they hauled many cattle. I think it was mostly sheep, probably so, all right. But I know coal was definitely one of the big items they hauled on the railroad.

Man: Did they have their own photographer?

George: They had a photographer by the name of Kennedy. He took these pictures. It's an odd thing. They're on glass negatives. Right after Mr. Thorne died, I got a friend of mine, Lawrence DeVed, and he took over the museum, you know, and the Thorne Studio. We went in and went through a lot of these. I've got quite a few pictures from him. But they were on glass negatives, very fragile. But there was this one photographer, named Kennedy, that took a lot of these pictures. Mr. Banks took quite a few and also Mr. Neal, Charlie Neal. I'm sure other people did, too.

Unintelligible comment.

George: Mr. McAndrews? I'm glad you mentioned him, because he came into the Uinta Basin with the Indian Department in 1884. So, he was already established here some twenty years before the railroad came in. He went to work for them when the railroad started. He was in charge of the operation. His home, by the way, is the Vernal Mortuary, where the Vernal Mortuary is now was the old John McAndrews' home. My grandfather knew him real well. In fact, there was the time that he was thinking about purchasing some ground from my grandfather. But he died in 1927 of a heart attack, and that's how come Mr. Sprague took over the operation. He was a very important man, a very influential man here in the valley, John McAndrews was. Anything else?

Unintelligible comment.

George: The main reason they couldn't get a railroad here was because of Green River. The line had been surveyed from Craig, Colorado. That's how come Harry Ratliff became a native here. He came in on the Moffat Road, surveying the Moffat line from Craig. I say the main reason was the Green River, that and the Moffat Road went broke, and Mr. Moffat committed suicide over it. He was a very smart man. But the Moffat Road was the one that probably would have come to Vernal.

But the Green River was a formidable obstacle. To build a bridge over it would have been quite an undertaking. So that was one of the things. The other reason was because of Baxter Pass, and they knew that the days of the narrow gauges were numbered, so, unless they could get a company that would want to tunnel under the pass, which was another obstacle that was in front of them, why, it just never materialized. And again, the Midland, who was going to build a railroad, they went broke.

Unintelligible comment, probably questioning the size of the Moffat and Midland railroads.

George: Well, they were standard gauge, they would have been standard size that they were running.

Unintelligible comment, probably mentioning perpetual talk about a railroad coming into Vernal.

George: They didn't, and it even persists some today. Another thing that took place back then was the oil shale. Even back in the '20s they had ideas of developing oil shale. Now, promoters came in and they said, "Hey, you've got a railroad right here in the middle of the oil shale beds." This was the Uintah. They built plants, one in Agency Draw, another up in Dragon, right on the Utah/Colorado line. Vic Karren had that property for a number of years, and I completely forgot about it. When I was about sixteen years old, I helped Bill Karren haul ties from up there. They did, they owned some of that country.

[Due to environmental noise, the taped voices are difficult to understand here.]

George: A lot of the old-timers went broke.

Doris Burton: I wish I'd had the experience of riding on the narrow gauge. My father [Vic Karren] bought that ranch just a few years after the train quit, but we had an experience of driving our car over the railroad bridge, because that was the only bridge that we had to get out to our ranch. These big, deep, deep washes that you had to cross, and you know how narrow this was and with the railroad ties.

My mother was the one, when we had to go to town, it was a long ways. It took all day to get out there. So, Dad was out there busy and she'd bring us kids and come to town and get groceries and so forth, and we'd have to drive across that bridge. Of course, we couldn't wait to get there, you know, the kids, because that was really fun to go over that, to look way down over the edge, really a thrill. But one time we took Edith Montgomery out with us, I'm sure a lot of you remember Edith, and she was just visiting and talking, and when we got in the middle of this bridge, one of the ties, a lot of them were coming loose by that time, and as another car had gone over them, it had bounced it up on top. So, Mom stopped and she said, "Oh, I'll get out and go straighten that tie." When you got out, there was about that much room to walk on. So, Edith said, "Oh, I'll get it!" and jerked open the door and looked down and said, "Oh, no, I won't!"

But it was really an experience to go across those in a car. When my dad went with his double-wheeled trucks, one wheel hung out over.

Man: No railing on it either.

Doris: No railing.

George: That's right, Doris. I'd forgotten about Doris' father owning that ranch.

Doris: One more thing, George, that McAndrews Lake, that was on our property, too, and Dad had Pierce [Freddie] Feltch with his big 'dozer make it a lot bigger than it was.

George: That's a beautiful lake and if any of you ever get the chance, go out there. Don't go in stormy weather. When you drive to Baxter Pass, you drive right past McAndrews Lake.

By the way, when these little towns was in operation, they had huge icehouses, like Calders used to have down here. They'd cut and store ice, and then in the summer time, load it on the trains, and bring it down, and deliver it to residents of these mining camps, in Watson and Dragon, and they all had iceboxes.

Going up this side of the pass, five-and-a-half percent grade, it's breathtaking, but going out the other side, seven-and-a-half percent grade, you just can't imagine how a train can make it up over something like this, even under normal conditions, let alone snowy, freezing weather.

I think for twenty or thirty years we haven't had a real hard winter. But they did back then. At times, when they couldn't push the snow away, they would take all the miners and they would go scoop-shoveling, and scoop the snow out of the cuts and one thing and another. They fought by hand. These people had to be some of the most dedicated, hard-working, earnest people that ever existed. I don't think we hardly realize some of the hardships that some of our forefathers went through. I don't think that there was ever anything mentioned on the Uintah about a very hard job or having to work an hour or two overtime or something like this, like you hear nowadays. These people had a job to do and they done it.

I've considered going to Baxter Pass with some cement and mortar and making a monument of some sort for these people. I'd do it if I didn't think that vandals, in the way that they do things nowadays, wouldn't destroy it in just a matter of time. It's too bad we don't have something down here on our park representing these people and the job that they done. I think it would be a worthwhile thing if we could push something like that through. Whether we can, I don't know. But they definitely need recognition for the fine job they done.

I might add that if you get a chance to get access to one of these books: *The Uintah Railway* [Henry Bender] exclusively is on the Uintah line out here, *Narrow Gauge of the Rockies* [Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg] has a story in it about the Uintah Railway, as well as several other small railroads in Colorado. They've done a lot of work on writing railroad stories.